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German in the Grades: Aims, Matter, and Method.*

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I. Introductory Remarks.

If we wish to do effectual work and be successful in our method of teaching, we must have a *definite aim* in view. The task of teaching is so complex that, unless we know what we are aiming at and adapt our methods accordingly, we are bound to grope blindly and muddle along ineffectively. Undoubtedly the "German schoolmaster" of old owed his well known success to the fact that he had a very definite aim in view in all his teaching. He may have ridden over some laws of psychology rather roughshod, but he knew what he wanted, which was not, as a rule, what we pupils wanted. And he did not always move along the line of least resistance in his efforts to accomplish his purpose. And as to us pupils, well, since "Men must needs abide, what fates impose," the first lessons we learned in school were: to curb our own wish and will and to do everything with the utmost painstaking, conscientious exertion. We were not consulted whether we *liked* this or that study, whether *we* thought this or that subject would be of any use to us in our later life. Too much child-study had not caused the "Schoolmaster" to make us the arbiter of our own training. To use a slang expression: we always had to come across and toe the mark; sometimes to the tune of the hickory-stick! And children who come over to this country now and enter our higher grades, prove by their pleasing exactness, minute preciseness, and untiring conscientiousness that the "Schoolmaster" of the Fatherland is still master of the situation. The first great principle impressed upon the German child's mind, is: "Yours's not to reason why, yours's but to do" and do it right!

Now this may seem to be rather un-American, but it has proved itself to be successful. And if the saying: "Nothing succeeds like success" is genuine American, we American teachers will not necessarily become hyphenated, if we fix our aim most clearly in our mind, place it before everything else in our endeavor, the child not excepted, and then adapt our methods accordingly, as the German "Schoolmaster" does. We surely do not wish to Germanize our schools, nor copy and ape the German "Schoolmaster" blindly and slavishly; but his fixedness of aim and his steadfastness of purpose are certainly valuable assets to any teacher in any branch and any land.

II. General Remarks as to Aim.

The method of instruction in any subject is determined by three factors: the *nature* of the subject, the *laws of the human mind*, and the *aim*

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we have; the latter being the all-important one. For if you know all the laws of psychology, and have a firm grasp of the subject, all this will avail you nothing, if you have no distinct purpose, no well defined aim in view. Now in teaching German, or any subject, there is a threefold aim to strive for: the *practical*, the *developing*, and the *ideal* aim.

• 1. The practical aim. It is certainly of great practical value to know more than one language. "Speak U. S.; U. S. is good enough for me!" is a know-nothing expression, rapidly becoming obsolete. A working knowledge of a foreign tongue is considered to be worth dollars and cents. And for divers reasons, German occupies the first place among all foreign languages. In many branches of commerce, in art, science and the finer technical industries, one can hardly get along without German. And these conditions, too, are increasing in numbers and value, and will increase with the growing dominance of the German speaking nations. The study of Spanish, for the time being, threatens to crowd out the German, but it soon will find its proper level, as the French did long ago, because back of neither is a strong world-power. For political, commercial, scientific and social reasons, German will hold second place in our country for years to come. In teaching German, therefore, we must always keep its practical value in view. All expedients we use in teaching reading, writing, and speaking must serve this utilitarian aim.

2. The developing aim. The study of any language is of great value in developing the mind. Some pedagogues claim that Latin and mathematics are the best mind-developers. This assertion may be true as far as the curricula of higher institutions are concerned. But the curriculum of our grade-schools does not lack a similar means of developing the child's mind: it is the German language with its thousand and one forms for numbers, persons, cases, tenses, modes, genders, its synonyms, homonyms, etc. If you wish to say something in a foreign tongue, you must *think* before you speak, while in the vernacular the opposite is very often the case. This developing value of learning German will not be slighted by a good teacher when he chooses his expedients and lays out his plan of procedure.

3. The ideal aim. We teachers have chosen a calling not of a mercenary character. Whoever enters the teaching profession for the sake of lucre, very likely makes a double mistake: he might have become a very successful business man, but he will surely be a failure as a teacher, an educator. For as the river does not rise higher than its course, so will a teacher who has no *higher ideals* judge, tax and treat every branch of study according to its utilitarian, marketable value only. May such mercenary hirelings never break into the ranks of the teachers of German! For if any subject in our course of studies has an ideal value, it is the study of German. Efficiency has become the most hackneyed word of the day. In

every branch of government, in all business ventures, in all our activities we are crying for efficiency. Every year a large number of young people go to Germany to study and to get, to gain and to acquire some of the German efficiency, or, if you please, of the German "Kultur." "Kultur" is not civilization, nor is it culture. We are fully as civilized as the German nation, and our educated classes may possess even more culture than theirs. But we are lacking in the German "Kultur," we have not even a name for it; but we know it *shows* itself in efficiency, all along the line, the schools not excepted. The "Kulturträger," the champions of Germany's "Kultur," are the teachers, from the university professor down to the Kindergärtnerin. And it is not so much the practical, nor the developing, but the *ideal* aim of their calling which makes them "Kulturträger." And we teachers of German in our country miss our calling if we do not avail ourselves of the golden opportunity to make full use of the *ideal* value of our branch. The German lessons ought to bring more educational gain of the *ideal* kind to the pupil than any other. But as long as our Lesebücher are an omnium-gatherum and the grammatical sentences are all made ad hoc, to order, having no ideal value whatever, the teacher must largely depend upon his own resourcefulness. He must be thoroughly versed in German history and literature, have a sympathetic knowledge of the German Volkscharakter, and an abundance of enthusiasm for his subject, and he will not labor in vain!

III. General Remarks as to Method.

There are two distinct methods of teaching a foreign language: the old, grammatical, deductive, constructive and the new, natural, intuitive, direct method. The old method begins with the vocabulary; deducts from given rules, constructs upon certain norms; makes grammar its main textbook; values written work much higher than the same work done orally, and uses the mother tongue as means of instruction. The new method begins with objects, with sense-perceptions, forms sentences in the foreign tongue; induces the child to imitate; familiarizes him with the foreign idiom, using the foreign tongue almost exclusively as the medium of instruction. According to the new method the lessons should deal with things familiar to the child, or with things which have already been made subject of lessons in the vernacular, in order that his whole attention may be concentrated on the new words, their meaning and pronunciation, their use in sentences. Grammar is taught for practical purposes only; definitions and rules are to be restricted within the narrowest possible compass. Very little recourse should be taken to translations, and even then a direct connection should always be maintained between the foreign words and their ideas. Thus the new method strives to cultivate the "Sprachgefühl," so necessary in German.

Both methods have their champions who are fighting each other in a genuine German fashion. But the new method certainly seems to be in the ascendancy. To those who stand aside and observe a strict neutrality, the midway appears to be the golden one. In fact, as long as children have been taught foreign languages, some teachers have always found and traveled this golden midway successfully. "Prove all things, and that which is good, hold fast!" Beware against becoming method-ridden, but remain master over the methods, remembering that methods are made for man, not vice versa!

IV. Expedients. A. Correct Pronunciation.

Formerly correct and uniform pronunciation was considered to be of little or no importance in teaching German. Every province, diocese and parish had its own dialect, which the schools did not dare or care to root out. Pronounce the words as they are correctly spelled, was about the only advice and guidance teachers of German would give their pupils. This the new method has changed very thoroughly. Phonetics is playing an all-important part as an expedient in teaching German. It has almost become a science in itself. New method champions strive to teach their pupils the perfect "Bühnenaussprache." That's certainly chasing the rainbow! If the teacher is careful in his own pronunciation and if he leads his pupils to imitate, there is no need of a special course in phonetics with all its bewildering terms, confusing superfine distinctions and perplexing phonetic charts. A few practical expedients are:

1. Illustrate on the blackboard that vowels have but two sounds: long or short; that two consonants shorten the preceding vowel; drill the most common exceptions where the double consonants -ss, -ch, -rd, -rt do not shorten the vowel, as in *sass*, *brach*, *Gebärde*, *Art*; show often that the personal endings -st and -t in verb-forms do not influence the vowel: *gibst*, *gibt*, *gebt*; make clear to the class when the consonants -b, -d, -f, -g, -s, -ch, -st are sounded soft and when harsh: *Dieb*, *Diebes*; *Hand*, *Hände*; *Brief*, *Briefes*; *Tag*, *Tages*; *sodass*; *Charakter*, *China*, *sechs*, *sechzehn*; *stand*, *bist*. In almost every lesson mispronunciations will give the teacher an occasion to drill a number of words illustrating the rule which has been sinned against. It is of more importance that he should have a series of words at his fingers' ends, proving the rule, than to know a single technical term of modern phonetics.

2. Class-reading. To drill correct pronunciation, especially in a large class, it is expedient to resort to class- or chorus-reading. There is no other way by which you can force each and every member of the class to take an active part in the drill. Chorus-reading gives the timid and diffident ones courage and may induce the indolent and sluggish ones to co-operate with the rest of the class. But since "everybody's business is

nobody's business," such class-reading has the tendency of making the individual members of the class more or less heedless and inobservant. The leader of such a concert must have a fine ear and strain it in order to detect and correct all dissonances.

3. Memorizing and reciting poetry. One of the best and most efficient means to drill the sounds, accent and tone of a foreign tongue is to make the child commit to memory and to recite pieces of poetry. But nothing should be memorized unless it has been thoroughly explained and properly read by the teacher. Assign poetic gems only! And there must be no exception to the rule: Every child recites every piece of poetry assigned!

4. Singing of German songs is an expedient of no mean value if the teacher knows how to teach singing. A singingmaster pays especial attention to distinct pronunciation. Singing relieves the tension of the class and puts it into the right mood. You may, therefore, either close or begin the lesson with singing. But it must not be overlooked that in singing pronunciation, accentuation and tone are not always the same as in common speech.

B. Teaching the children to *speak* German. The children of German parentage are no longer bi-lingual. Inquiries at two large conventions of Lutheran parochial teachers proved the fact that German is not the vernacular even in the so-called "German" schools. During the last 15 years it has been rapidly becoming a foreign language. Before that time both languages could be heard on the playgrounds; now the children answer their German speaking parents in English. The young people entering or leaving a German church think and speak in English, whether the subject be the German sermon, or the German victories, or a German festival. These conditions obtain still more in the public schools. Many of our pupils do not understand German, the larger part of the rest do not speak it. Their parents expect the teacher to accomplish what they are neglecting to do and could do much better than the teacher. Still, to be enabled to speak the living language he is studying, is but a just and fair claim of the student. This ability can be gotten only by constant practice and continual proper exercises. With the old method of reading, of learning grammatical rules, of translations and written compositions little or no speaking ability was achieved. The new direct method makes use of several more or less effective expedients to attain the desired end.

1. Catechizing. In some church-schools the catechetical method reigns supreme. Teachers prepare a set of 50 and more questions on every important lesson. Where this is not done, the subject is considered of minor importance. Such catechizing is surely an excellent discipline for the child's mind. You force him to think and answer quickly, giving him

no time to translate question and answer into English. I can not think of a more direct method than such catechizing. But it must be based upon things well known. Its main purpose in our case must not be that of its father, Socrates: to lead the child to learn something new, but rather to make him say in German what he already knows. In form this process may become real Socratic by allowing the children to put the question, the teacher or other children answering. If the teacher is not an expert tactician he should prepare the questions beforehand. To insist upon answers in complete sentences under all circumstances is unnatural and often interrupts and disturbs the direct, lively continuity of the work.

2. Object-lessons. Mothers teach their small children by showing them objects and telling them the name of things shown. Thus the child gets new words, conceptions and ideas, and it learns to express its thoughts in short, simple sentences. The new method is sometimes called mother's method, because it proceeds in a similar way. But such object-lessons are liable to become rather dry or childish in the upper grades. If we had a "German" room, furnished expressly for our purpose: maps, charts, plans, pictures, sceneries, photographs, busts, statues, flags, coins, books, phonographs, all German, then such a room would be one of the best expedients in itself. But as it is, our only objects are dead school utensils, and it requires a rather lively, enthusiastic teacher, full of imagination, to infuse the necessary life into the dead objects, we have to deal with, lest the whole object-lesson become a tedious bore to the class and teacher. I readily admit to have had small success with object-lessons in upper classes.

3. Good, appropriate pictures are excellent expedients to teach children to think and speak in German. But the pictures must be full of German life, present and past. And in upper classes we must not study the figures on the canvass as much as what they represent. If the teacher knows how to visualize the idea of the picture in simple language, in a descriptive or narrative manner, as the case may be, all three aims: the practical, developing and ideal will be well served. The mooted question, whether the picture illustrates the story or vice versa, we pass by as an idle one.

4. Acquiring a vocabulary. Without a sufficient vocabulary you can not speak in any language. The old method of teaching a foreign tongue assigned long lists of isolated words to be memorized. After having studied French, according to this method, two years, I could say but a few trite phrases. The new method has changed this completely. We teach words from the reading or conversation lesson. The children learn to use them at once in sentences. A very effective way seems to be to find a series of words, more or less synonymous; e. g. Fahne, Flagge, Banner, Standarte; vane, flag, banner, standard; Füllen, Fohlen, Stute, Mähre; filly, foal, colt, mare. Such word groups must always be based upon the read-

ing lesson, be of practical value, and of such nature that the pupils can help finding them. As a rule, the whole class enjoys this kind of work, which, at the same time, is very profitable. During the week the class gathers these comparative word groups on paper, and on Friday I dictate the first word of every group, the children writing the whole series in both languages. Such groups must be constantly reviewed whenever a lesson offers an opportunity.

5. Written work. It is beyond any class in the grades to write compositions. We must be satisfied if the majority of a class is able to write transpositions, changing tense, number, person, form of sentences, copy from memory, and take a well prepared easy dictation. Written work carelessly corrected by the teacher, is of little or no value to the child. Baneful it is to him if the teacher gets into the pernicious habit of letting corrected errors go un-rewritten.

6. Story-telling. All children love to hear stories. And good stories, well told, have a great educational value. All my classes have a story-telling day every week, provided they have earned such a treat by their work during the week, both in English and German. They always consider it a severe punishment, whenever the class-teacher or myself deny them their story. In the upper grades the stories are chosen from the German Volkssagen, from German history or from German-American history. Wherever possible, I correlate the story with the German or English reading lessons or with the history lesson of the class-teacher. After I have told the story in the most simple and concrete language, illustrating it on the blackboard and by voice and action, I have the children retell it, in whole or in part. And since "all is well that ends well", we always finish our week's work with the story on Friday, immediately after a short dictation. The aim of the teacher in telling stories must be at once of a practical, developing and ideal nature, the latter predominating.

7. English as an expedient. Although the direct method insists upon using the German almost exclusively as a means of instruction, it seems to be a didactic error not to use the English whenever it serves the purpose best. Sometimes a rule, a definition, a phrase, an expression, a group of words may be explained very clearly and concisely in English, while it is well nigh impossible to accomplish your aim in German. And I have always found that comparative study of the two languages is not only interesting to the class, but also an excellent expedient to make the children understand and appreciate the German. Tell them that thousands of English words are of German origin, lead them to find the connection between the two: as Tal, dale; Taler, dollar; Fähre, ferry; Hund, hound; Motte, moth, and before long they will try to find an English word hiding behind every German one, and vice versa!

V. Supplementary Reading.

With a good basic reader and making full use of the expedients enumerated, the demand for supplementary readers is not exactly a crying one. Still, children like to read some other books besides their Lesebuch. Such supplementary readers should contain, as texts, nothing but good selections from German popular classics, leading the children into the sagas, legends and fables of the fatherland, acquainting them more intimately with the German Volkstum, heroes and great men, and cultivating their taste for good, wholesome reading matter. Some such readers have an appendix in which every word of the text is translated into English. Such a "crib" is certainly objectionable to every votary of the new, direct method. A list of synonymous words (nouns, adjectives, verbs), taken from the text, given in both languages, may be valuable to a teacher who believes in this kind of work.

But let us not forget that all expedients are but makeshifts and that supplementary readers can not supplant and supply the teacher. And if German, in some quarters, is looked down upon as a doomed "Aschenbrödel" whose place is a seat way back, then it is up to us teachers to dress, trim and polish her up in a most presentable manner. This will require work, hard work, but it will be work well worth the sweat of the noblest in our profession. And this work can not be done on teachers' conventions, by lectures, papers and talks, but in the school-room!

The Reorganization of Teachers' Training in German in Our Colleges and Universities.

By **John C. Weigel**, Instructor in German, University of Chicago.

One of the most obvious defects in American education is the lack of proper agencies for the training and equipment of teachers. This is particularly true of the training of teachers for secondary schools. For while the normal school is being developed in ever larger measure, its specific province has been, and remains, the development of teachers for the elementary school. And for many reasons, chief among them the lack of opportunities for broader cultural training, it is well that such is the case. Speaking broadly, however, there is, as yet, no very large attempt (in the same sense as the normal school) to train and equip teachers of high school subjects. The candidate for a high school position realizes that the high school is fundamentally dedicated to departmentalization. He therefore finds it necessary to go to a college or a university to equip himself with the subject matter in his particular chosen field. With here and there an